

School Teachers' Emotional Intelligence in Relation to Demographic Characteristics and Job Outcomes

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Abstract: The goal of this study attempts to investigate the impact of emotional intelligence on job outcomes such as job satisfaction and job performance as well as how demographical characteristics influence on emotional intelligence among school teachers in the Malaysia context. Data were collected from public school teachers via the questionnaire survey. Results from the data analysis suggested that teachers' emotional intelligence was associated positively with both of the job satisfaction and job performance. The mean level of Malaysian school teachers' emotional intelligence was not statistically significant higher than the emotional intelligence of the Malaysian population. Contrary to expectations, gender and working experience did not reveal any statistical differences with emotional intelligence in the sample studied. The findings of this study are useful in facilitating school administrators to improve teachers' job outcomes.

Key words: Emotional intelligence, job outcomes, demographic characteristics, school teachers, Malaysia

INTRODUCTION

In the eleventh Malaysia plan, Malaysia has set its goals on becoming a productive, harmonious, high-income country status by 2020. Therefore, education is one of the most critical efforts that will transform Malaysia from middle to high income nation. Successful education system will promote productivity and human capital development. However, one of the primary concerns is the quality and consistency of teaching among school teachers (Akiba *et al.*, 2007).

Strong evidence from prior studies has found that teaching career in Malaysia is stressful (Ishak *et al.*, 2010). According to the Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia Leads Research on Emotional Intelligence, the main contributors for Malaysian teachers experiencing emotional demands are due to the heavy workload and stressful working environment. Teachers that are working in a demanding work environment can lead to physiological changes or emotional strain (Bakker and Schaufeli, 2000); decreased job satisfaction and work commitment (Morgan and O'Leary, 2004; Smith and Bourke, 1992); reduce job performance (Akhlaiq *et al.*, 2010; LePine *et al.*, 2004; Reilley *et al.*, 2002); influence students' growth and learning capacity (Whitehead and Ryba, 1995) and difficulty in achieve accomplishment on the job (Bakker *et al.*, 2007; Maslach *et al.*, 2001; Schaufeli and Bakker, 2004). Teachers working in such a stressful environment can create emotional outburst that affect their job outcomes. Accordingly, Jennings and Greenberg

(2009) suggested teachers' emotional intelligence are important for effective teaching and improve their job outcomes.

Currently amply of literature emphasizing emotionally intelligence employees is an important aspect of organizations. Studies have showed that top performers in the workplace posse the skill of emotional intelligence (Fatt, 2002; Goleman, 1996). Although, emotional intelligence has turn into a popular topic of research, it has not been received sufficient systematic attention among researchers to work in this field (Selamat and Nordin, 2014; Wong *et al.*, 2010) which indicates the urgent need of more research on emotional intelligence in the education system. In addition, researchers have mentioned that there is little evidence in literature to determine school teacher emotional intelligence level based on their demographic profile (Hochschild, 1983; Gardner and Qualter, 2011; Shipley *et al.*, 2010). Hence, the objectives of this study are to gauge the impact of emotional intelligence on job outcomes as well as how demographical characteristics influence on emotional intelligence, by focusing on school teachers samples.

Literature review

Emotional intelligence: The recent years have seen that emotional intelligence have received great attention in teacher development (Vesely *et al.*, 2013). The notion of emotional intelligence was first introduced by Salovey and Mayer (1990). They defined emotional intelligence as "the ability to monitor one's own and

other's emotions to discriminate among them and to use the information to guide one's thinking and actions" (Salovey and Mayer, 1990). The model of emotional intelligence has separated into two different perspectives: the ability model and trait model of emotional intelligence. The ability model considered emotional intelligence as a cognitive-emotional ability that focuses on the individual's ability to process of emotional information and is usually assessed by objective performance test (Mayer and Salovey, 1997). The trait model incorporates wide array of competencies and personality and measured based on a self-report (Goleman, 1996; Bar-On, 1997).

Emotional intelligence and job satisfaction: Locke (1969) describes job satisfaction as the pleasurable emotional reactions towards one's job. Herzberg introduced the two factory theory which distinguishes between hygiene factors and motivators. Hygiene factors are extrinsic factors to the job or work itself that cause job dissatisfaction such as company policies, job security and supervision. Whereas, motivators are intrinsic factors that arise from the job itself that cause job satisfaction such as challenging work, recognition, responsibility.

Past researches have observed the positive relationship between emotional intelligence and job satisfaction (Daus and Ashkanasy, 2005; Guleryuz *et al.*, 2008; Van Rooy and Viswesvaran, 2004). Emotionally intelligent employees are more likely to experience high satisfaction with their job because they have the ability to recognize and control their emotions (Sy *et al.*, 2006). Similarly in the teaching profession, teachers' emotional intelligence is correlated with job satisfaction (Jelondar and Goodare, 2012; Platsidou, 2010; Sy *et al.*, 2006; Wong and Law, 2002). Emotionally competent teachers understand the use of positive emotions such as happiness and passion to motivate them in the workplace tend to have higher job satisfaction (Jennings and Greenberg, 2009). As such, this study proposes:

- H₁: teachers' emotional intelligence associates positively with their job satisfaction

Emotional intelligence and job performance: Job performance is defined as actions or behaviors an individual actually do in the workplace (Campbell, 1990) defined. Some researchers have theorized that job performance is influenced by employees' emotional intelligence (Carmeli and Josman, 2006; Shih and Susanto, 2010; Van Rooy and Viswesvaran, 2004). Individual with high emotional intelligence was more successful in completing cognitive tasks which led to better job performance (Schutte *et al.*, 2001). In school setting,

teachers with emotional intelligence plays an important role in overall teaching effectiveness (Schutz *et al.*, 2006). Excellent teachers who are able to manipulate his or her emotions seems to be more understanding and caring to the needs of students and better in monitoring their negative emotions to facilitate a positive classroom environment (Kremenitzer and Miller, 2008). As such this study proposes:

- H₂: teachers' emotional intelligence associates positively with their job performance

Demographic characteristics and emotional intelligence: Teachers are commonly known as working in a scholastic environment and expected to display positive emotions within the workplace (Hargreaves, 1998; Zembylas, 2004). By considering this, school teachers should have an above average of emotional intelligence. Rahman and Muhamad (2011) showed that the emotional intelligence mean score across Malaysian is 4.64. Therefore:

- H₃: the mean level of Malaysian teachers' emotional intelligence is significantly higher than the Malaysian population

Previous researches have consistently revealed that gender was a significant influence on emotional intelligence (Fatt, 2002). Both males and females have the opportunity to correctly build up their own emotional knowledge. Specifically, studies showed that women have higher emotional intelligent compared to men (Anari, 2012; Brackett *et al.*, 2004; Ciarrochi *et al.*, 2000). Women are generally better in appraise their own emotions and more adept in recognizing emotions (Thayer and Johnsen, 2000). Therefore:

- H₄: there is a difference in the emotional intelligence level based on the gender

Bar-On (1997) indicated that emotional intelligence is not inborn but it can be developed and learned with proceeding age. Individuals expose to the changes to cope with the requirements and environment pressure when they grow this will better developed their emotional intelligence. Therefore, as an individual grow older, emotional intelligence tends to increase consistently with age (Bar-On, 2000; Birol *et al.*, 2009; Kafetsios, 2004). Therefore:

- H₅: there is a difference in the emotional intelligence level based on the age group

Past researchers have demonstrated that working experience was positively correlated with the emotional intelligence (Day and Carroll, 2004). Teachers that worked longer in the school tend to experience emotional changes (Chan, 2006). Consequently, their emotions are developed throughout the years and emotional intelligence is increasing. Therefore:

- H₆: there is a difference in the emotional intelligence level based on the working experience

MATERIALS AND METHODS

Procedure and participants: Participant in this study were school teachers from academic public schools in Peninsular Malaysia. Permission to conduct the research was first granted from the school principals. Questionnaire survey was then distributed to participants in a voluntary basis. Participants were assured that the data they provided are confidential and their responses to the survey would be anonymous. No individual results would be reported in the study. In total, 384 school teachers agreed to participate in the current study. The sample included 52 (13.5%) males and 332 (86.5%) females. This scenario where female outnumbered male teachers are common in Malaysia schools. In terms of age, majority of the teachers were between the age range of 30-34 with the total of 87 (22.7%). There were only 10 (2.6%) teachers with the age <25 years. About 158 (41.1%) teachers had 2-5 years teaching experience while 100 (26%) have 5-10 years experience and about 126 (32.8%) teachers have served the present schools for >10 years.

Measures: School teachers’ emotional intelligence was measured by using the self-report Wong and Law Emotional Intelligence Scale. WLEIS has four subscales with four items in each subscale: self emotional appraisal, others’ emotional appraisal, use of emotion and regulation of emotion. Respondents rated themselves on a five-point Likert scale. Coefficient alphas for the overall emotional intelligence were 0.85.

The 20 items Minnesota Satisfaction Questionnaire Short Form (MSQ) developed by Weiss *et al.* (1967) was used to measure job satisfaction. The MSQ measures the degree to which a school teacher feel about intrinsic satisfaction and extrinsic satisfaction as well as the feeling towards the general job satisfaction. Coefficient alpha of job satisfaction was 0.86.

This study adopted seven items from an instrument developed by Williams and Anderson (1991) to measure job performance. The scale evaluates teachers’ task performance in the school using a five-point Likert

scales. The response options for this scale ranged from strongly disagree to strongly agree. Coefficient alphas for the seven items were 0.75.

RESULTS

In the present study, data were first analyzed with correlation analysis. As illustrated in Table 1, job satisfaction and job performance were positively correlated with emotional intelligence, in line with hypothesis 1 and 2.

To validate the third hypotheses, analysis with one-sample t test was performed. By comparing the total mean score of emotional intelligence sample (M = 4.08) with the mean score of Malaysian population (M = 4.64), Malaysian school teachers emotional intelligence did not significantly higher than the general population (t = -29.370, df = 383, p<0.05). Therefore, hypothesis 3 was rejected.

Next, analysis with independent-samples t-test was performed to examine emotional intelligence level for gender (Table 2). The current study found no significant differences in the emotional intelligence level between male and female’s school teachers (t = -0.404, p>0.05). This part of our hypothesis was rejected.

Finally, analysis with ANOVA was used to examine differences in the emotional intelligence level by age groups (Table 3) and working experience (Table 4). When

Table 1: Descriptive statistics and correlation matrix

Parameters	Mean	SD	1	2	3	4	5
Gender ^a	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Age	38.48	8.58	-0.07	-	-	-	-
Working experience	9.96	7.20	0.06	0.52**	-	-	-
Emotional intelligence	4.08	0.37	0.02	0.17**	0.08	-	-
Job satisfaction	3.91	0.40	-0.09	0.15**	0.10*	0.40**	-
Job performance	4.25	0.36	0.05	0.16**	0.17**	0.40**	0.37**

N = 384. Gender^a was a dichotomous variable (1 = male, 2 = female); *p<0.05; **p<0.01

Table 2: t-test results of emotional intelligence by gender

Variable	Gender	Mean	SD	t-value	df	Sig.
Level of EI	Male	4.06	0.38	-0.404	382	0.687
	Female	4.08	0.37			

Table 3: ANOVA results of emotional intelligence by age group

Variables	Sum of squares	df	Mean square	F-value	Sig.
Between groups	1.870	6	0.312	2.273*	0.036
Within groups	51.678	377	0.137	-	-
Total	53.548	383	-	-	-

*p<0.05

Table 4: ANOVA results of emotional intelligence by working experience

Variables	Sum of squares	df	Mean square	F-value	Sig.
Between groups	0.891	2	0.446	3.224*	0.041
Within groups	52.657	381	0.138	-	-
Total	53.548	383	-	-	-

*p<0.05

Table 5: Regression analysis for demographic variables predicting emotional intelligence

Variables	Independent variable	Standardized coefficients		
		Beta	t-values	p-values
Total EI	Gender	0.033	0.654	0.513
Adjusted R ² = 0.025	Age	0.167	3.313*	0.001
	Experience	-0.013	-0.218	0.827

*p<0.05

examine the result, there was a significant differences between emotional intelligence level by age groups (F = 2.273, p<0.05) and working experience (F = 3.224, p<0.05). Therefore, both hypothesis 5 and hypothesis 6 were accepted.

In order to investigate the relative importance of demographic variables on the emotional intelligence, regression analysis was utilized. The regression analyses results confirm that only age remain as significant predictor for teacher’s emotional intelligence. Regression model explained a minimal amount of 2.5% of the variance in emotional intelligence is attributed by age group in this study. The regression results were reported in Table 5.

DISCUSSION

Analysis of the results indicated that teachers’ emotional intelligence associates positively with their job satisfaction, support the findings of past researches (Jeloudar and Goodarzi, 2012; Platsidou, 2010; Sy *et al.*, 2006; Wong and Law, 2002). The findings suggested teachers with high level of emotional intelligence are more alert on how their emotions will influence their daily teaching process and the students’ learning behaviors which may positively affect their job satisfaction. Accordingly, teachers that recognize their emotions will undertake the appropriate actions to promote positive emotions and elicit negative emotions that influence their job satisfaction. For example, competent teacher that aware on the changes of their own emotions due to the job stress may effectively buffer against it by properly manage and regulate their emotions. This could lead to higher job satisfaction (Brackett *et al.*, 2010).

Result supported previous research that job performance is influenced by employees’ emotional intelligence (Carmeli and Josman, 2006; Shih and Susanto, 2010; Van Rooy and Viswesvaran, 2004). This finding suggests that teachers with emotional intelligence understand that appropriate emotion will promote them in achieving the performance goal and be more adept in regulate their negative emotions. For example, teachers with high emotional intelligence will explore emotion that will effect students’ learning outcome and take the

necessary steps to regulate these negative emotions which in turn can help them in better manage their teaching and task requirements.

It is thought that teachers should have an above average of emotional intelligence since teachers have a vital role in a school. However, the result was contrast to the expectation. The inconsistency of the result can be reasoned that insufficient preparation and lack of support to develop on the skill of emotional intelligence among school teachers. Inability of school teachers to develop emotional intelligence are less likely to manage their emotional responses effectively which could lead to emotional outburst (Chang, 2009).

Further, contrary to expectations, gender and working experience did not reveal any significant differences with emotional intelligence in the present study. The results obtained did not supported previous researches that gender has emerged as an important predictor of emotional intelligence (Fatt, 2002) and experienced employees tend to report higher emotional intelligence. The lack of evidence on the findings may due to the choice of emotional intelligence measurement tool. Among these demographic profiles, age is the only variable has been found statistical differences with emotional intelligence. These findings are consistent with the results reported earlier, indicating that emotional intelligence develops with proceeding age (Sliter *et al.*, 2013; Bar-On, 1997).

CONCLUSION

Overall, this study has contributed to the emotional intelligence literature by performing an exploratory research to determine whether demographic profiles and job outcome has a positive impact on emotional intelligence among Malaysian school teachers. Although, results indicate that Malaysian school teachers may not have above average emotional intelligence, several previous studies have suggested that emotional intelligence can be strengthen through training and contribute to better jo performance (Chan, 2006; Nelis *et al.*, 2009; Slaski and Cartwright, 2003). Therefore, school administrator can develop courses and training programmes for school teachers to foster their emotional intelligence.

Most of the study on emotional intelligence was conducted in a western context. Hence, this study provide multi-cultural validity on the significant role of emotional intelligence in improving job outcomes since sample of the current study was more diverse which included Malay, Chinese and Indian.

It is necessary to give concerns on some potential limitations in this study as well. First, data collected from the respondents were self-reported. Respondents may have the tendency to produce self presentation biases and faking or may not have a preconceived notion about their emotional intelligence (Brackett *et al.*, 2006) which may lead to common method variance and incorrect findings (Podsakoff *et al.*, 2003). Second, the study was conducted in a cross-sectional nature. Future research by utilizing longitudinal methodology to test the causal relationship can be adopted. Finally, to better understand the topic of emotional intelligence, future researches should employ other emotional intelligence measurement tools to determine whether different patterns of results would reveal.

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